



September 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes for the Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council

The Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council (Coordinating Council) meeting was held in the RIPTA board room, 705 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, and was called to order at 2:02 PM. An attendance sheet is attached to these minutes indicating that some participants met in person and others joined online.

Joelle Kanter, RIPTA planner, began by announcing the Coordinating Council's vision: accessible, coordinated statewide mobility for all Rhode Islanders. Benny Bergantino then motioned to approve the minutes of the July 10, 2023 Coordinating Council meeting. Maureen Maigret seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes were approved.

Joelle then referenced two of the strategies outlined in the RI Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan, which the Coordinating Council adopted in March. All projects selected for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310 funding for Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities in Rhode Island must be included in the plan, which will be in effect for the next 5 years.

Along with a summary of existing transportation services and maps detailing gaps in service and areas of need, the statewide plan includes eight strategies and a recommended action plan. Joelle highlighted two of the strategies: pursuing additional funding for human services transportation and increasing coordination of travel training services statewide.

Increased funding is required to support additional transportation services in areas of need. Sarah Ingle, RIPTA's Executive Director of Planning, reminded the group that different services assist different populations, and everyone has a role to play collectively to make sure that no group is left out. Sarah encouraged the Coordinating Council to advocate and think creatively about the challenge of providing better, more frequent transit service while also providing fare assistance to those who need it.

A discussion followed with Heidi Showstead suggesting that Ride paratransit customers would consider paying a premium fare for trips outside the current service area to expand their options and encourage independence. Kim Einloth said that Block Island is interested in connecting its residents with benefits and services that they are eligible for on the mainland including the Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) program.



Joelle noted additional funding strategies in the Coordinated Plan, such as:

- Submitting joint applications for federal discretionary grants for human services transportation
- Utilizing FTA Section 5311 rural funds to purchase community vans
- Seeking opportunities to use federal funds for local match requirements
- Encouraging local organizations to fund clients' RIPTA trips through institutional Wave accounts

Joelle then shared that RIPTA received funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to create a Rhode Island travel training network, which will bring partners together to offer customized transportation support to the state's older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income groups. The curriculum will be offered primarily to staff at organizations who can customize the content to meet their clients' specific needs. RIPTA's consulting team is now preparing a survey for local organizations that participate in travel-training related activities. Next steps are to review survey results, plan more in-depth interviews, and begin a best practice review of peer agencies that do travel training and/or coordinate travel training networks in other regions.

Following the discussion, Mario Olivieri, RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services, reported on the state's transition to the new NEMT contract with MTM which includes updated provisions. The agency is particularly focused on outreach about the program to residents in underserved outlying areas.

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 PM.



**Rhode Island Human Services Transportation Coordinating Council
September 11, 2023 Attendance List (in person and Teams)**

Council Members	Organization
Benny Bergantino	RI Division of Statewide Planning
Jacques Dextrateur	RI Office of Veterans Services
Sarah Ingle	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Joelle Kanter	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Mario Olivieri	RI Executive Office of Health & Human Services
Joanna Pallini	RI Office of Veterans Services
Betsy Sheridan	RI Department of Human Services

Others Present

Name	Organization
Kim Einloth	Block Island (New Shoreham) Human Services
Maureen Maigret	Senior Agenda Coalition
Lorna Oinonen	AARP volunteer
David Schultz	Senate Fiscal Office
Heidi Showstead	Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee
Katherine Tennett	East Bay Community Action Program